

RESPONSE TO THE OBJECTIONS AND REJECTIONS

1. OBJECTIONS TO THE CLAIMS

A list of 2 claim objections has been identified.

Each requested amendment was made as specifically identified and requested.

2. REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. 112, SECOND PARAGRAPH

Claims 23 and 28-33 have been rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph as being indefinite. A list of 5 asserted issues is given.

Each issue raised by the Examiner has been addressed by amendments to the specific claims identified as having objectionable or unclear language.

3. REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

Claims 24-26 and 28-33 have been rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as unpatentable over McCrea Jr. (US Patent No. 5,605,334) in view of Mothwurf (US 5,919,090).

Claims 1-23 and 35-37 have been rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as unpatentable over McCrea Jr. (US Patent No. 5,605,334) in view of Meissener et al. (US 5,779,546), Mothwurf (US 5,919,090) and Soltys (Published US Application 2003/017737). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The entire basis of the rejection operates on the following premise:

- a) McCrea somehow makes the game control aware that the hand has been completed;
- b) McCrae therefore obviously has some undisclosed mechanism for providing a signal to the game control indicating that the game is over;
- c) Meissener and Mothwurf individually show providing a signal at the completion of a hand, by manual action (Meissener) and by card sensing (Mothwurf) and
- d) Soltys shows the provision of additional cards to players;
- e) Therefore it is asserted to be obvious to actively provide a specific signal (as taught by Meissener or Mothwurf) that the hand is over.

The rejection was in error in the original claims and is further removed from the practice of the technology claimed in the present application after the amendments to the claims.

First, McCrea does not ever specifically state that a signal is provided that the hand is over,

The Nature of the Teaching of the "Completion of Hands" in Meissener and Mothwurf

Meissener teaches the indication of two events. First there is a completion of a round of play of a game of cards (this is a "hand" in one vernacular) and does not teach the completion of the dealing of a hand. Meissener specifically states:

"Since the game is played with credit, the credit line is established by the host computer and sent to the processing subsystems for local storage. The processing subsystems keep track of the wins/losses and forward this data to the host computer as well. The processing subsystem keeps track of the player's activity and receives a card identification signal as each card is dealt. Each card for the entire hand is stored by each processing subsystem including the dealers' cards. The dealer knows which player to deal to by looking at the LEDs on the touch screen. At the completion of each hand the dealer may signal, by way of the dealer's touch screen 210a that the hand is complete. Upon being signaled that the hand is complete, the dealer's processing subsystem 210b may poll each processing subsystem 201b-207b. After each processing subsystem 201b-207b has been polled, processing subsystem 201b-207b calculates wins/losses based on, for example, the value of the players' cards in comparison to the value of the dealers' cards. The dealer's processing subsystem 210b calculates all the win/loss values and then polls each station in turn to make sure that the amount calculated by each processing subsystem 201b-207-b matches the amount calculated by the dealer's processing subsystem 210b. In this manner, error checking is realized. If the amounts do not match, then an error message is sent to the dealer's touch screen so that the error may be handled"

Meissener also states with regard to another completion of an event:

"As shown in FIG. 9, step 1002, the system is initialized. This may include the step of inserting the special set of playing cards into automated dealing shoe 200 in order to calibrate the dealing shoe's motor speed. Also, all touch screens may be initialized and the values of all variables set to zero (or as appropriate). At step 1004, the ability to initiate game play on all of the touch screens is disabled. Processing continues to FIG. 10 via off-page connector X. At step 1006, all touch screens begin prompting players to begin game play. At step 1008, if players do not request that game playing begin, then processing returns to step 1006. Otherwise, processing proceeds to FIG. 11 via off-page connector A. At step 1010, the player enters his identification. This may be accomplished, for example, by inserting an identification card into an appropriate card reader. At step 1012, the player's identification is transmitted from the card reader to the host computer. At step 1014, the host authorizes a credit limit. This may be accomplished in several ways. One method is to have a credit limit stored and updated in the identification card. Thus, this credit limit is transmitted from the card reader to the host. Another method is for the casino operator to provide a credit limit. This may be obtained from information previously obtained by the casino operator. At step 1016, the credit limit is transmitted to the players processing subsystem. At step 1018, if the credit limit is zero (e.g., play is not authorized), then at step 1020, play is denied. If play is denied, the player is provided a message indicating the play is denied. Then, processing proceeds to step 1006 via off-page connector X at which time the player is once again prompted to begin play. If, at step 1018, play is authorized, then processing proceeds to FIG. 12, step 1026, via off-page connector B. At step 1026, the player is not permitted to enter a bet until a new hand is ready to start. If the hand is not ready to start, then, at step 1028, play is

denied. Processing proceeds between steps 1026 and 1028 until a new hand is ready to start. When a new hand is ready to start, at step 1030, the player is requested to enter a bet. At step 1032, the player's processing subsystem receives a signal from the dealer's processing subsystem that bets are now locked out. This signal will not be transmitted until the dealer indicates that he is ready to deal a hand. Until the player transmits this signal, processing proceeds between steps 1030 and 1034 at which the processing subsystem requests a player to bet and the player actually enters the bet until, at step 1032, the player is locked out from entering a further bet. Thus, once the player is locked out then processing proceeds to step 1028 where play is denied. The player must wait for another hand to start before he can enter another bet. At step 1034, if a bet is entered then, at step 1036, the bet is transmitted to the dealer's processing subsystem."

Mothwurf also has a particular description of an automatic indication of hand completion in the disclosure:

"The cards are then removed from the table including the dealer cards and are then placed in the discard rack. The change in signals from the betting area sensors 701 of the players who have lost, the change in signals from the winning area sensors 701 of the players who have won and the change in signals from the card sensor 108 indicate to the data processing system 104 that the hand is now complete and the system has returned to the state H0 idle, i.e. a new hand is about to commence. No information has as yet been gained from the last played hand, since no player "busted" by taking extra cards. However, the hand counter has been advanced by one. This hand counter is actually an entry in the data processing system rather than a physical counter or display (although the hand count could be displayed if desired). In addition the changes in signal at the players' betting square sensors 701 show if an individual player has won, has lost, or has neither won nor lost (no change in sensor signals from his betting square 105)."

The claims now recite that the reading of the rank and suit of cards (the first cards, for example) delivered to each player hand position is used to define an edge of a hand. Such language is used in the claims such as:

"the processor identifying an edge of a hand formed by the first cards delivered to a players hand by the read rank and suit of the first cards;"

As the specific feature is not shown by not one of the four references, the claimed subject matter is unobvious. The rejection is in error.

Claims 24-26 and 28-33 have been rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as unpatentable over McCrea Jr. (US Patent No. 5,605,334) in view of Mothwurf (US 5,919,090).

For the same reasons noted above, these claims now recite:

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"the processor identifying an edge of a hand formed by the first cards delivered to a players hand by the read rank and suit of the first cards;"

These limitations and application of technology are not disclosed in any of the four references.

As such, the rejection is in error.


CONCLUSION

All objections and rejections have been addressed and overcome by amendment and/or argument. All claims are in condition for allowance. If the Examiner is of the opinion that issues may be discussed that can resolve any issues preventing allowance of the application, the Examiner is respectfully invited to call the attorney of record at 952.832.9090 to discuss those issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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30 January 2006

Date